

WORDS OF WORTH

Early Spring 2011

I wrote an introduction, and then the earthquake and tsunami happened, and somehow, talking about Spring and snowdrops seems a little less important at this moment. Yet Spring will come, both here and in Japan. Let us hope it will bring healing and recovery.

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I try to keep up with developments in search engine optimization (SEO), which usually means reading specialists' websites. So when the *New York Times* started talking about changes in Google's search engine algorithm, I paid attention. What I read inspired me to do some test searches for my clients, using terms common to their industries. One client, it seems, is a role model for doing "organic search" right. You may find value in their experience, discussed in the article below.

Search Engine Rankings: (Quality) Content is Key



Google is changing the rules that it uses to rank web sites in its search results. Most recently, it changed its search algorithm to reduce the ranking of web sites that do not provide unique, high quality content. It's a significant change, expected to affect about 12% of search results (a typical change affects a percent or so). The impact of the change is expected to be felt most heavily by "content farm" sites, which contain a lot of articles with a minimum of value, and "scraper" sites that simply copy articles from other sites (including ours!) without permission.

Google is also getting press for cracking down on companies that engage in questionable linking practices (e.g. JC Penney, Overstock.com).

Fortunately, you don't have to pad your website or engage in "black hat" linking techniques to get good Google results. One of our clients consistently shows up on the first page of relevant Google search results--without paying a search engine optimization consultant thousands every month or having a staff member dedicated to SEO. In fact, they haven't given much conscious thought to SEO since the last time we did a significant update on their website.



What the client *does* have is an active speaking and journal article publication program, as well as an ongoing communication program that leverages both of those, and a well-put together website that makes use of basic SEO techniques.

Together, these add up to a number of first tier SEO placements. Here's how:

- When client staff are speaking at an event, the sponsoring organization frequently has a link from their website to the client's website.
- Google's algorithm looks at those links and effectively says, "Hmm, lots of links from well-respected organizations. Let's increase their ranking."
- The client posts many of the presentations they make on their website, providing lots of fresh, original, high quality content on a regular basis.
- The Google algorithm "thinks"---"Lots of content I haven't seen anywhere else, on exactly the topics that their website is organized around. No 'black hat' SEO tricks here," and it gives them another ranking bounce.
- The client also posts staff articles that are published in professional journals on the website, adding to the original content.
- The company produces both electronic and print newsletters that are also posted on the website and that also contain high quality original content.
- All this content reinforces the terms used on the website menu buttons and in the page content that describes what the company does.

While this isn't a terribly precise description of the algorithm's effect--Google doesn't share its algorithm and I don't make it a full-time study---what's critical here is that much of what drives the company's search result rankings is *high quality content that is unique to their website*.

All the new content updates have a more immediate impact now that Google is doing continuous incremental indexing of the web instead of periodic full indexing (that change, codenamed Google Caffeine, occurred last June).

The basic SEO techniques used on the client's website involve appropriate use of meta-tags, URLs, web page titles (not the same as the header on the page), and meta-descriptions. A little bit technical, but a long way from rocket science.

Maybe your organization doesn't do a lot of public speaking. How can you achieve this kind of web presence? Perhaps you are interviewed by blogs, or maybe you write your own. Perhaps the company has press coverage it can leverage, or a company newsletter that you can post on the site. Maybe you have satisfied customers who would like to be quoted. Whatever the circumstances, make sure that you ask for the link to your site, and that you make maximum use of your original, high quality, content.

Is there a role for SEO consultants? If you have the budget and find an ethical consultant, certainly. Consultants can help you identify the best meta-labels for your site, identify respected directories and other possible sites that will link to your site, and handle the day-to-day management of paid search if you choose to pursue that, among other possibilities.

If a consultant offers to have articles written for your site at a price that seems too good to be true, vet the quality carefully before you buy. Make sure that they really do understand your industry and how your company fits into it, and that the articles are extremely relevant to your readers.

You don't want to find yourself down-ranked. I hear that Google algorithm is a hard marker.

News Bytes

On our Desktop

From the volume of work flowing our way, the Great Recession appears to be receding. I hope you are all having similar experiences. Current and recent Jussim Communications projects have included:

- A website for a new consulting business in healthcare privacy and security
- Web copy for a green energy consultant
- [A guide to protecting your company from phishing and spoofing attacks](#)
- A website for an "edu-tainer" who trains professionals and caregivers in therapeutic exercise
- Online training programs on technology for sales representatives

Several of these, as well as other samples of our work, are available through our website [Portfolio](#).

About Jussim Communications

Jussim Communications tells compelling stories for our clients. We create powerful copy, rooted in solid positioning of services, products or ideas. Our writing reaches the audience on many levels, including the emotional level where decisions are made. Our background in consulting, marketing and operations lets us quickly grasp each client's business and market. We develop:

- Dynamic marketing communications and web copy
- Newsletters and articles that educate your market and build name recognition
- White papers that establish your expertise and creativity
- Effective advocacy materials and grant reports

We would love to help tell your story. Call us at 718-788-3937 for a free initial consultation.

Learn More

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